

## COMMODITIES

### Coconut - Production Exports Increase

Sri Lanka had a favourable coconut harvest during the first four months of 1989. The result was that coconut production increased by nearly 30 percent in 1989, to 784.5 mn nuts, over that of the Jan - April period in 1988. Mainly responsible for the better crop was improved weather conditions.

### Kernal Products

Coconut kernal products exports increased by 70 percent in both volume and value. Among the kernal products, the largest increase in export earnings was in the DC category.

Production of coconut oil and desiccated coconut also increased substantially. DC up from 1,711 mt. tons in the 1988 period to 11,143 mt. tons in the 1989 period; while coconut oil production moved up from 10,600 mt. tons in 1988 to 23,023 mt tons in 1989. Export earnings from all coconut products

recorded a substantial increase in the four month period, almost doubling from Rs 304 mn. (SDR 7.2 mn) in the 1988 period to Rs 596.9 mn (SDR 13.7 mn) in the 1989 period.

	April'88	April'89
International Prices (Mt) US\$	1,006.00	713.00
Local Market Prices (Kg) Rs	23.00	16.75.

However, Coconut oil prices in the local market were up from Rs. 12,885 per mt in April 1988 to Rs 20,735 per mt. ton in April 1989.

Table 2 Local Market Prices of Coconut Products (Rs. per Kg.)

	1987	1988	1988 (Jan-April)	1989 (Jan-April)
Coconut oil	16.75	30.80	34.78	23.24
Desiccated	18.35	23.04	24.52	18.48
Copra	12.53	19.79	24.29	15.15
Coir Fibre			7.44	9.27
FOB Price				

Source:

1. Cocount Development Authority
2. Department of Commerce

Though production increased producers could not receive maximum benefits due to the fall in prices in the local market. The price of Copra was down nearly 38 percent. In the case of DC prices both in the local and international markets were down heavily between April 1988 and April 1989 as seen in the DC market prices in the table above.

### Non Kernal Products

An interesting trend was that in the first four months of this year export earnings from non kernal products went up to Rs 540 mn; which was well over the Rs 351 mn earnings of the 1988 period. Among the non-kernal products the largest export earnings were from Fibre products with export earnings in this sub-sector amounting to Rs 259 million for the first four months of 1989; this was a 50 percent increase over earnings in the 1988 period. Meanwhile, earnings from Shell products reached Rs 181 mn in Jan-April 1989, a 12 percent increase, over 1988 export earnings.

### SPICES

Earnings from some spices continued their upward trend of 1988, particularly cinnamon and nutmeg. In 1988 cinnamon and cloves showed substantial increases in export earnings over those of the previous year; while quantity-wise too there was a heavy increase in export of these two items.

### Cinnamon

Cinnamon is the biggest export earner among the minor agricul-

Table 1

### EXPORT OF COCONUT PRODUCTS (Rupees Million)

Kernal Products	1988 (Jan-April)	1989 (Jan-April)	Change %
Oil	2.91	52.92	95
Desiccated	63.98	230.69	72
Copra	12.62	39.27	68
Nuts	24.69	22.99	-07
Cream	2.08	5.37	61
<b>Total</b>	<b>106.28</b>	<b>351.24</b>	<b>70</b>
Non Kernal			
Fibre	130.38	258.91	50
Shell	158.41	180.87	12
Other	92.02	100.66	
<b>Total</b>	<b>380.81</b>	<b>540.44</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>487.09</b>	<b>891.68</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: Coconut Development Authority

**EXPORTS OF SELECTED MINOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS  
(IN METRIC TONS)**

Year	Cinna- mon	Change %	Carda- momos	Change %	Cloves	Change %	Pepper	Change %
1987	7,505	-1.1	192	-29.4	492	-33.5	2,015	+58.5
1988	6,811	-9.2	139	-27.6	2,251	+357.5	2,692	+33.5
1988 (Jan-Apr.)	1,805		66		1,173		1,241	
1989 (Jan-Apr.)	1,982	+9.8	77	+16.6	153	-86.8	569	-54.1

Source: Trade Statistics, Dept. of Commerce

tural export crops; its share being around 26 percent of the total in value terms. Since 1984 cinnamon export earnings have increased despite a lower volume of exports in recent years. The highest recorded quantity of exports for a year was 8,682 mt tons in 1981, and though it was 6,811 mt tons in 1988 in the first four months of 1989 exports had exceeded those of last year. There is also a better price for cinnamon at present due to the high demand in the world market and earnings for the first quarter of 1989 reached Rs 195 mn as against Rs 99 mn in the first quarter of 1988.

**Nutmeg**

Exports of nutmeg and mace also recorded a significant rise over that of the previous year - Rs 14 mn in the first four months of 1989 as against Rs 8.9 mn in 1988. In terms of quantity, during this period exports went up from 69,800 kgs in 1988 to 130,700 kgs in 1989.

**Cardamoms**

Cardamoms have recorded the highest unit price among all minor agricultural products. However, the level of earnings and volume of

exports have been on the decrease since 1986. In 1988 its drop was 28 percent over 1987; although in the first four months of this year the volume of exports increased marginally. The annual average price of cardamoms in the first four months of 1988 was Rs 265.48 per kg, but this year it was down to Rs 235.67 per kg.

**Pepper**

The annual average market price of pepper has shown a sharp decreasing trend; coming down from Rs 115 per kg to Rs 83 per kg this year. Both in terms of quantity and export earnings also pepper has recorded a considerable drop, with earnings decreasing from Rs 152.5 mn in the first four months of 1988 to Rs 43.1 mn in the same period of this year.

**Cloves**

Export of cloves have also recorded a very heavy drop in the first four months of 1988, coming down from 1,173 mt tons in the 1988 period to 153 tons in Jan-April of this year. Meanwhile, earnings dropped from Rs 120.8 mn in the 1988 period to Rs 10.4 mn in 1989. Average market prices of cloves, however, had improved in 1989.

**AVERAGE MARKET PRICE**

(Rs. per Kg.)

Commodity	1987	1988	1988 Jan.-Apr	1989 Jan.-Apr
Cinnamon (quills)	60.97	111.05	52.26	149.40
Cloves	103.56	127.18	102.70	110.93
Cardamoms	270.55	241.88	265.48	235.67
Pepper	129.20	87.26	115.53	83.18

Source: Trade Statistics Department of Commerce

**HOUSING**

**WOMEN AND HOUSING IN  
INDIA**

**- Humanising Housing**

In India there is a struggle to empower women in the housing process. This has become an issue for open debate and in a paper titled "Humanising Housing" Lalita Das, a practising architect and member of the Women's Centre, Bombay, has highlighted the difference in design and use of space, in social status and thereby decision making powers of women, especially in the communities where women design and build houses as against those communities where men do so. This paper also gives reasons why the system is changing more and more in men's favour and makes proposals on how and why changes should be brought about. The following are relevant excerpts from the paper by Das.

Women are the primary users of housing which for the majority of them is a work-place as well as a residence. Yet, they have been and are more and more marginalised in the housing process. Housing programmes calculate the requirements on the basis of family as a unit and the design, location and details are planned to suit the needs of the head of the household who in India is always assumed to be a man. Yet, according to UN micro-studies, one third of the households are women-headed - a fact that is not reflected in either designs or in women's participation in the process. In fact, the degree of women's involvement in the housing process is a clear indication of women's position in society.

**Women designed and built housing**

In many communities in India, women have been designing and building their own houses and still do so even though the numbers of these communities have shrunk greatly. These communities today mostly consist of rural communities who still are

or were herders, tribals and semi-nomads.

#### **Men designed and built housing**

On the other hand, when women are totally excluded from the housing process, different social structures and design patterns become obvious.

\* Men design for themselves as primary users and women as secondary users. Thus the prime areas such as front otlas (platforms) and rooms are demarked as men's areas and women are relegated to back rooms and the rear courtyard - if any.

\* **Economics and building methods:** When women built their houses, it was with materials that they had easy access to such as stone, bamboo, tree branches, mud, cow-dung, thatch, grass etc. Moreover, they used their traditional skills such as weaving, plastering with cow-dung etc. With these natural materials either depleted or getting commercially exploited, women's access to these has got limited. Now these materials need to be bought, not gathered. At the same time, a need for pucca (permanent) houses involves the use of materials such as burnt bricks, tin sheets, cement etc. which are all man-made and need to be bought. With women being considered more and more economically non-productive, men control all the finances and therefore buy the building materials. Eventually, the house and decision-making regarding it come to be seen as men's rights.

Thus it becomes obvious that the difference in housing design and construction methods is not a difference only in physical structure but involves a fundamental change in attitudes, living patterns, men's and women's roles in family and community and in women's value as human beings. Further, empowering women in the housing process also helps bring about a fundamental change in society.

#### **Struggle to empower women in the housing process**

As seen before, housing is major instrument of control in a society. In

India, traditionally housing has favoured not only property owners over others and state over individuals but also men over women. A drastic change in housing policies is therefore required to bring about social change. In response to the UN Declaration of family. The Draft National Housing Policy published in 1987 deals mostly with legal, administrative and financial problems involved in increasing construction activity.

Many non-governmental organizations and individuals felt the lack of social perspective and the lack of people's participation in the government's programme and joined hands under the banner of National Campaign for Housing Rights (NCHR) to take another look at what housing means in relation to our total system. The central aim of NCHR is to draft a People's Bill of Housing Rights and to get it passed through parliament. In its definition of housing, NCHR states "Housing is not just the buildings. To be complete it must have access to the basic things that sustain life. Good housing is a vital base in society for citizens to build free and equal relationships among themselves and in turn to build cultural identities and society itself". It concludes that the right to housing is a fundamental and human right - "the right to live with dignity".

Precisely because NCHR recognises the significance of many different issues involved in the housing campaign and that housing touches many different areas of life, it has attracted a varied group of organizations and people including many women's organizations all over the country. NCHR had realised the importance of gender and housing issue at an early date and given it priority in the issues to be researched and studied. Yet, the focus of gender and housing was on providing relief to women rather than to change the system. The Draft Approach Paper (DAP) prepared by the Legal Working Group of NCHR concentrated on problems such as:

- \* property rights for women - inherited and matrimonial;
- \* provision of plots for women's housing in town-planning;
- \* resettlement primarily to suit women's needs.

When the DAP was presented for national discussion and a National Consultation (NC) was held in Bombay in May 1987, the focus suddenly changed. The discussion at NC was very lively and as points started coming up, it was obvious that it was necessary to break out of the framework in which housing and rights to housing are seen and raise new concepts on what housing means to men and women in our social context. Here one can go back to the differences observed between societies in which women designed housing and those in which men did so and pinpoint some of the differences in social context:

- \* that women consider the requirements of the whole of the households as of equal importance. When women design and build, it is for the household. Men always give primary importance to their own needs when designing and constructing;
- \* that the housing process has continued according to this value system, thereby empowering men and oppressing women;
- \* that community support and sharing is more pronounced when women participate in the housing process;
- \* there is more tolerance of other religions and different life styles in these communities;
- \* single, aged and infirm persons are integrated in and cared for within the community.

From these it becomes obvious that just giving more rights to women in the same system will not change the system but may even strengthen it. What is required is that the proposed Bill act as a catalyst for changing the man-woman relationship which at present continues to be that between oppressor and oppressed as well as

creating a stratified and intolerant society.

To many of the men who attended NC, it was a shock to realise how entrenched was the value system whereby man and his needs are considered superior to women and their needs and how it spreads to create an oppressive society. It was realised that the first priority is to humanise the man-woman relationship and that the whole concept of the Bill needs to be re-examined from the perspective of "Humanising Housing".

Humanising housing is a very wide concept and many of its implications are just beginning to come to the force. Much more study, thought and discussion are required to transform the concept into a viable proposal. Some of the areas proposed for the study are:

*Realisation of non-material value of housing:*

- \* Realisation of emotional involvement of women in housing.
- \* Giving value to physical labour involved in making a house into a home.
- \* Understanding insecurity and fears in women due to homelessness such as physical violence, brutality, child-rearing problems, etc.

*Removal of artificial limitations imposed on women:*

- \* Granting of equal rights to women to ancestral as well as matrimonial property.
- \* Removal of the division of social roles by gender.
- \* Removal of demarkation of men's and women's interests and activities within and without housing.

*De-nuclifying family:*

- \* Removal of isolation and thereby control of women in a nuclear family.
- \* Re-generating communal living structures whereby community support and sharing can be achieved without eliminating privacy and individuality.

Though interim reliefs are certainly required, the thrust of the required change needs to follow the above mentioned guide-lines.